Volume 20 No. 2 June 2009

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WIP
WORKS IN PROGRESS

WORKS IN PROGRESS

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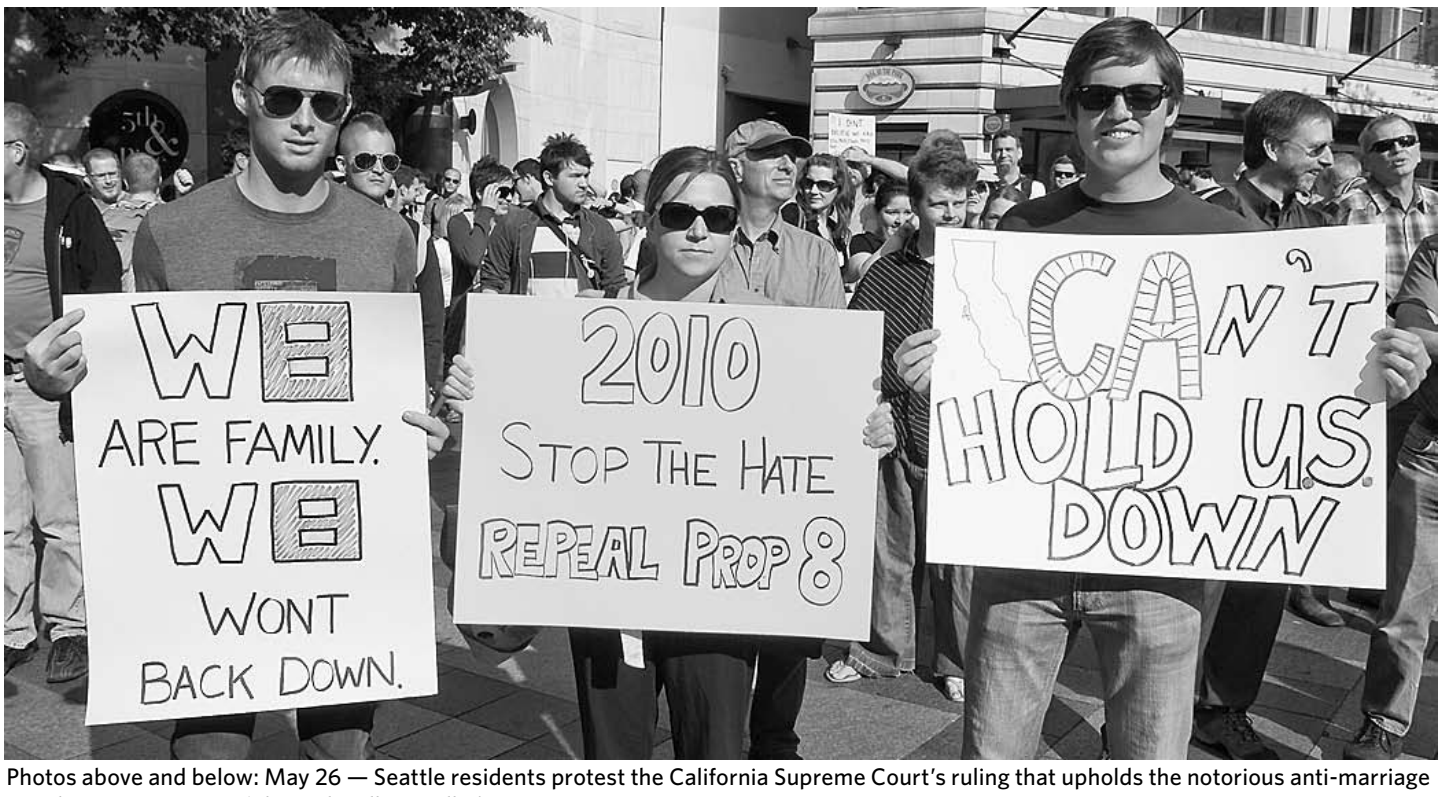

Photos above and below: May 26 — Seattle residents protest the California Supreme Court's ruling that upholds the notorious anti-marriage equality Proposition 8. (Photos by Elliot Stoller)

Conservative groups attack domestic partnerships in Washington

by WIP News Service

Since the 2009 Domestic Partnership Expansion Bill was signed into law by Governor Christine Gregoire, conservative groups have retaliated with the dehumanizing Referendum 71.

Intended to revoke over 200 rights and responsibilities clarified for domestic partnerships into the bill, the referendum must get 120,577 signatures by July 25. If this is done, supporters for domestic partners will have to change their approach.

According to a pledge petition from a coalition (including the groups Equal Rights Washington, FUSE, the Religious Coalition For Equality, Human Rights Campaign, The GSBA, PFLAG and the Task Force) attempting to stop Ref. 71, supporters of domestic partnership will need to actually vote 'Yes' if the referendum qualifies since the language will ask to re-enact the Bill, not repeal it.

The *Seattle Times* editorial board spoke out against Referendum 71 succinctly on May 11:

"Thousands of people have difficulty making ends meet. No one needs a campaign to stomp on legislation that doesn't hurt anyone. The bill in question tidies language in numerous statutes and legislation to give registered gay and lesbian domestic partners equality in business and legal affairs, the same rights married couples enjoy.

> "Thousands of people have difficulty making ends meet. No one needs a campaign to stomp on legislation that doesn't hurt anyone."

"Petition supporters note Washington lawmakers gradually expanded the state's domestic-partnership law over three legislative sessions, adding benefits once reserved for married people. The incremental approach scares detractors but is a smart way to change the rules slowly as societal opinions evolve. Polls shows younger voters favor gay marriage."

From a national standpoint, a bill was recently introduced by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida and Sen. Susan Collins of Maine that would "provide federal health insurance and enhanced dental and vision benefits, retirement and disability benefits, and family, medical and emergency leave", according to the *Times* board.

A Venezuelan consulate recently admitted in Olympia during a panel that some women who hold significant positions in his nation's government are lesbian but have chosen to keep this aspect of their identity private. This reflection on an international sphere shows how paramount the LGBTQ (lesbian, bi, gay, trans, queer) precipice stands in emboldening a local-to-global transformation.

As the struggle continues for LGBTQ people, supporters of domestic partnerships have numerous options:

- Decline to sign Referendum 71 petitions. Sign the pledge at EqualRightsWashington.org and get friends to join you.
- Ask organizations to join the growing list of groups working to retain the Domestic Partnership Expansion Bill.
- Stay updated on the issue at *EqualRightsWashington.org*

PMR takes on US war in Afghanistan

by Stephani Hemness

With the Obama administration's escalation of the war in Afghanistan, shipments out of Fort Lewis, via the Port of Tacoma, are increasing. According to an Olympia Port Militarization Resistance (PMR) press release, "Deployments of three Stryker Brigade Combat Teams, based at Ft. Lewis, are scheduled for later this year. One deployment is destined for Afghanistan, while the other two will be deployed to Iraq. In anticipation of the equipment being shipped through regional ports, a concerted campaign of resistance has been formulated."

Non-violent direct action began in early May, with several successfully created blockades of Strykers on their way to the Port of Tacoma. Meetings during the weeklong action were usually held in the evening at Coffee Strong, a GI coffee house in Lakewood. Though the group has been highly organized thus far, more support is still needed. "It's been more difficult to get support in Tacoma. It's been difficult to get people to realize that stuff is still going through [the ports]" says Chris Grande, of Olympia. "PMR needs more people involved who really want to help out in any way possible."

Grande became active with PMR in November 2007 with the Port of Olympia protests, and has been involved in direct actions and helped with legal support in the most recent Tacoma actions. "I'm pretty comfortable putting myself out there, but I try to be pretty smart about it," Grande says of his experience forming blockades. Grande has also worked behind the scenes with legal support work, which he views as a bottom line to "make sure things run smoothly for the people who get arrested."

Legal support is an important aspect to the organization behind PMR. It provides other activists with the information they need before, during and after direct action and arrest. Patty Imani, who has been active with Olympia PMR since 2006, has been coordinating the legal defense fund, which helps provide legal funding for activists. The fund also makes sure that the movement's attorney receives reimbursement for basic expenses accrued while supporting activists in the court system.

"We're not the criminals. The port, the police, anybody who aids an aggressive war effort is," Imani says. "There's always room for more people to come in and do support work," she adds.

"There are definitely a lot of roles to fill, without involving arrest," notes Kteeo Olejnik, an Olympian PMR activist who has been involved since 2007. Olejnik has participated in blockades in the past, and most recently has been doing support work with outreach and communication behind the scenes. "I want to give people the tools to be able to do what they want," she says, noting the high state of privilege involved with being able to take direct action. She adds, "If you don't know anyone it can be intimidating. It's important to have that resource for people. Especially for those who say 'I want to help out, but can't get arrested.'"

PMR has recently begun using a new communications system with Hackbloc, using cell phone text messages and a Twitter feed. Information is received at what is called the "Comm Center"—which usually runs out of a volunteer's home—verified, and sent out to the feeds for PMR participants to use. Information usually comes

▸ **PMR** continues on page 2

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions

Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

We value well-researched pieces that cover news stories that would be informative to readers in the South Sound. We value news and analysis over opinion pieces. We value stories by local authors. We value submissions on stories that are misrepresented or ignored by mainstream media.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress*, it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *olywip@gmail.com*. Send event announcements to *wipannouncements@gmail.com*.

Or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

Governing Tool

The following statement is part of the Editorial Policy and is the governing tool for the Anti-Discrimination Clause:

> WIP *will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by* WIP *to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but* WIP *reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

Mission Statement

"Our aim is to confront injustice and encourage a participatory democracy based on economic, social, and environmental justice. *Works In Progress* is dedicated to providing a voice for those most affected by the exclusionary and unfair practices that seek to silence the oppressed."

Anti-Discrimination Clause

We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

Back Issues

Some back issues are available in the Timberland Library system. *Works In Progress* is being archived on microfilm by the UW Library.

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Volunteering opportunities are also available Monday through Friday 7:30am to 4:00pm. Evening and other hours are available with advanced notice. Contact CHUMA International at 360-493-5641 or raymond.reyes@providence.org

For safety reasons volunteers need to be at least 14-years-old.

▸ **PMR** continued from page 1

from someone in legal support or intelligence from scouts who verify the time and location of moving Strykers.

"PMR in general needs more participants," says Ringo Carson, who helped set up the new communication system, and who once stayed up for two and a half days straight because he was on the phone lines for support. Carson describes working in the communication group as a full time job, which usually involves three to four people on the lines from nine until about midnight. "It's rewarding," he says, "I feel like I am a part of something bigger than myself. No matter who you are, you can participate," he adds, "PMR has a pretty straightforward, easy to understand tactic. It's a great way of putting ideology into reality."

"We're making progress," says Olejnik, "We're all still growing and learning and we're getting better. The amount of police presence shows our progress. The fact that the military needs guards to move equipment in this country is a sign."

"It doesn't matter if the blockades only last five seconds," adds Grande, "The worst thing to happen would be for the vehicles to get through without anyone noticing. People need to see that these things are real."

The present challenge seems to be forming an effective movement in Tacoma similar to the ones seen at the Port of Olympia and Aberdeen. "After the 2007 Port of Olympia protests it was no longer expedient to use the Port of Olympia for military shipments," says Grande. PMR will continue to use similar tactics of resistance at the Port of Tacoma.

"The idea of direct action makes sense to me," says Olejnik, "It would be great if we held signs and the government listened—but they're not. And it's sad. But PMR is really inspiring."

Updates on previous and upcoming PMR actions can be found at *olypmr.org*

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Longtime WIP volunteer Janet Blanding took a break from her advocacy for domestic partnership and marriage equality to engage in these rights herself. Congratulations, Janet and Robert!

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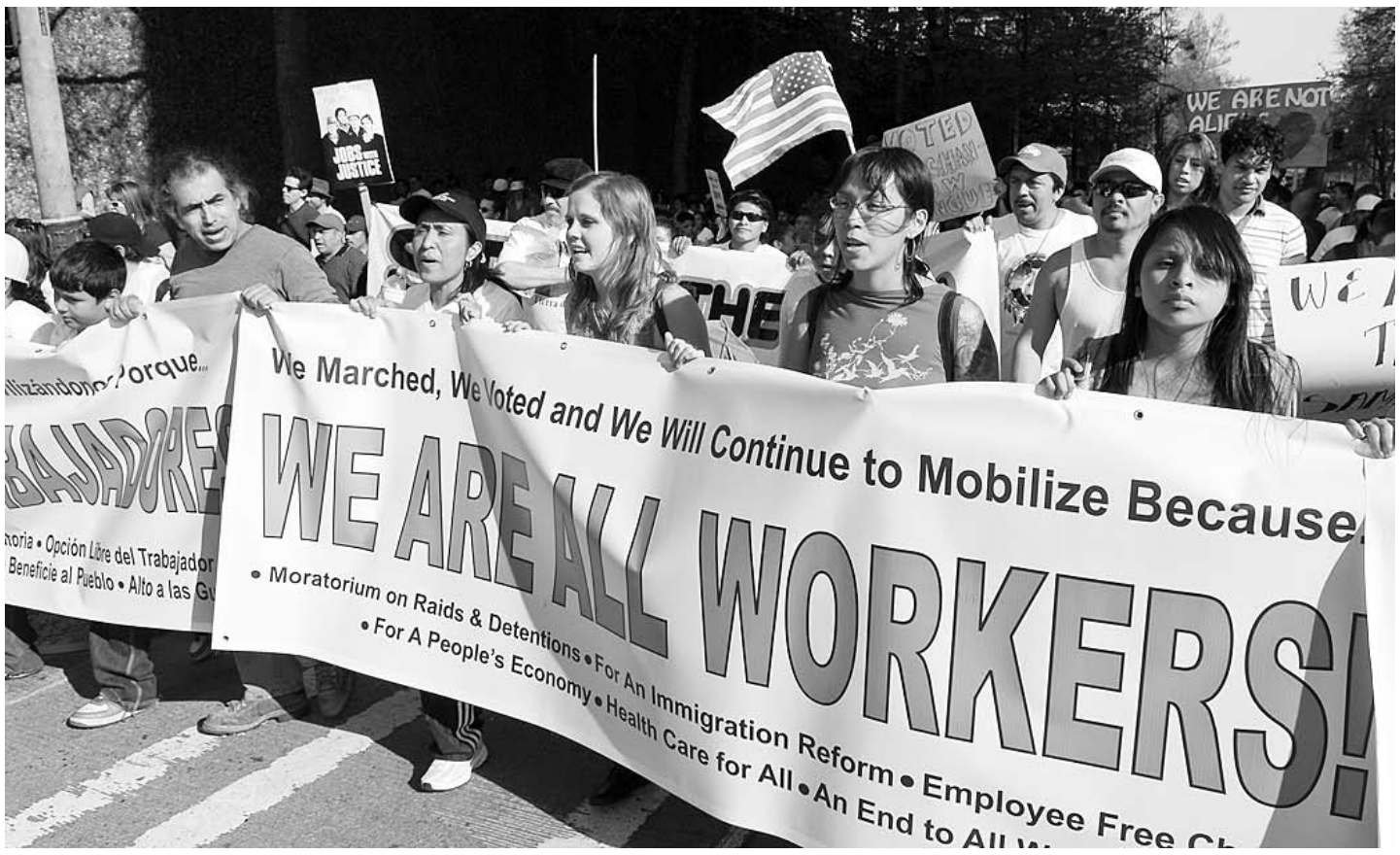
¡Sí se puede! A movement for people's economics

The following is the text of a speech given by Peter Bohmer at the Seattle May Day, 2009 Rally and March for People's Economy. It was delivered in English and Spanish.


We Marched, We Voted and We Will Continue to Mobilize Because
WE ARE ALL WORKERS!
• Moratorium on Raids & Detentions • For An Immigration Reform • Employee Free
• For A People's Economy • Health Care for All • An End to All
WE ARE NOT
THE

Photos above & left: 2009 May Day Rally in Seattle. "ICE" refers to the notorious Immigration & Customs Enforcement. Photos by Elliot Stoller.

Gracias para venir a primer de Mayo!! ("Thank you for coming to the First of May!")

Since December 2007, three million families have lost their homes, five million people have lost their jobs in the last year, and even more have lost health care coverage. These numbers will worsen. Are immigrants the cause of this economic crisis? No, they are part of the solution. Are workers wanting too much money the cause of the crisis? No!! Wages have been falling for most workers.

We need to understand and challenge an unsustainable economic system that has been fueled by more and more debt; where financial institutions like Countrywide Mortgage bought and sold mortgages, stocks and bonds, on the gamble that housing prices would continue to rise. Working people have been forced to borrow at higher and higher interest rates as rent, the prices of health care, education, food, gas have gone through the roof while wages have grown slowly. Manufacturing jobs have declined as capitalists find it more profitable to make money in playing and speculating with money than in producing cars, computers, and steel. Jobs in social services and social programs have been cut as government spending increases for prisons and the military. As long as we have a system, based on production for profit, capitalism, we will have unemployment, economic insecurity, huge inequality in income and wealth, poverty—a system that blames immigrants, where workers are a means for corporations to make profit off, where the environment is a resource to be exploited.

How do we move from an economy based on profits that are supposed to trickle down but don't to a people's economy? The human costs of this crisis are huge but it is also an opportunity to build mass movements that demand the right to a living wage job for all, amnesty for the undocumented, for women's liberation and the end of racism, for the right to unionize—to unite the many against the few with economic and political power. People want explanations of what is going on and ideas on what to do.

President Obama and Washington State Governor Gregoire will continue to put the interests of the bankers and Boeing first unless we get in the streets in large numbers and demand a stimulus package that spends government money to create millions of necessary jobs. Let us demand universal health care; and that the government takes over banks to be run by community and labor activists who put the needs of working people first in making loans and extending credit. Let us stop evictions. Let us organize for a progressive income tax in Washington to replace the sales tax, higher federal taxes on the wealthy, end U.S. wars and cut hundreds of billions of dollars from the military budget, and close most prisons and the Immigration Customs Enforcement detention centers. More fundamentally, we can and should overthrow the existing unequal system and build a people's economy based on production for need, not profit, where we, the people, make the decisions on what to produce and how to produce it, one based on equality and human dignity and sustainability and global justice. Let us create a participatory and democratic socialism.

¡Sí se puede! ("Yes, we can!")

Peter Bohmer is a community organizer and an economics professor at The Evergreen State College.

About those tea parties

Dear Works in Progress,

I've been a regular reader of your paper and appreciate the consistent progressive resource you provide to the community. I was disappointed however, to see the article "Of Tea Parties and Teleprompters" by David Michael Green in the May 2009 edition. This rant against the "regressive right" is elitist and damaging to progressive politics. The author makes fun of the Tea Party attendees for being poor, uneducated, dirty, obese, and lacking dental care. At the same time, he makes not one mention of the super-rich interests that are behind the Republican Tea Parties, and who are the beneficiaries of billions in bailouts while fifty million Americans suffer from… poverty, a poor education, endemic health problems like obesity, and a lack of dental care.

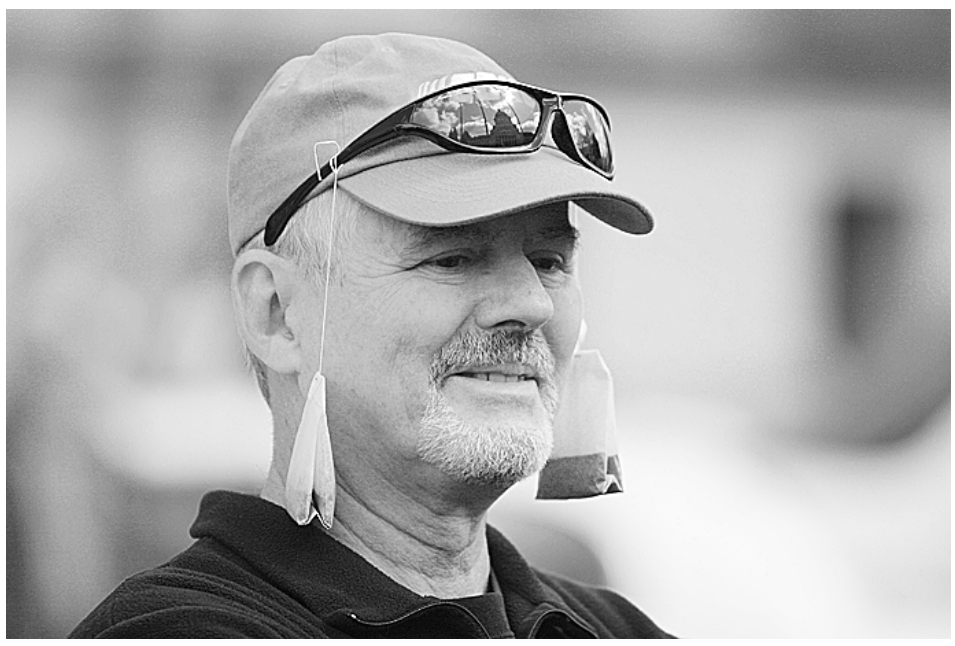
He argues in his article that he "always thought Lincoln got it wrong [in 1861]. Lincoln should have let the backward, racist, theist, regressive South go its own way." The consequence of this choice would surely have been to subject 3 million African slaves to at least several more decades under the yoke of slavery. How can this be progressive?

Mr. Green finishes with an analysis of how for the last 50 years, the Republicans "got an entire country full of people to suspend disbelief, and nod their heads in all the right places whenever they were poked with the appropriate stimulus." For most of the last fifty years, the Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the Presidency for 20 years, and did some pretty significant anti-progressive poking and stimulating along the way.

Our world community is faced with tremendous social and environmental challenges. Progressives should recognize that we are competing with the defenders of privilege to win the hearts and minds of working Americans. It is hubris to assume like Mr. Green, that the Republican right is on a suicide mission. While I agree with Mr. Green that "President Obama looks more and more statesmanlike, and better and better in the polls", the failure of the Democratic administration and Congress to solve serious financial, social, and climactic problems could easily result in the swing of working Americans back to the right. I think it's also a mistake to assume that Obama is not a defender of privilege. While Obama is looking statesmanlike, his policies on corporate bailouts and Afghanistan are certainly in the interest of the rich and powerful.

In order to win the battle of hearts and minds, we need to recognize that American workers are not stupid just because they disagree with our politics. We all share the same problem – trying to find leaders that can be trusted. Given the poor quality of leadership served up by both the Democrats and Republicans over the last fifty years, it is no wonder that Americans flip flop from left to right and back again. For progressives to prove ourselves as trusted leaders we must engage in a respectful conversation with people even if they are poor, dirty, obese, and lack dental care.

Greg Starling,
Olympia



Teabaggers at the Capitol in Olympia on April 15. (Photos by Jim Mayfield)

OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL RACE OVERVIEW

by WIP News Service

Candidates for the Olympia City Council may file through June 5, 2009. A primary election will be held August 18. The top two candidates in each race will advance to the general election on November 3. Current councilmember Karen Messmer has announced she will not seek re-election. Joan Machlis, who was appointed to the Olympia City Council in January 2008, is seeking retention of her seat. Jeff Kingsbury and Joe Hyer are seeking re-election. Data below is current as of June 1, 2009.

CITY COUNCIL SEAT #4

Karen Rogers

"I will always remember that Olympia belongs to all of us, not just to some."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Policy Specialist at the Liquor Control Board, longtime public servant

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Opposes the rezone

WEBSITE: www.citizensforkarenrogers.org

CANDIDATE BIO, GLEANED FROM WEBSITE: I have worked for several State agencies as a rules coordinator and policy specialist. I also serve on the City of Olympia Utility Advisory Committee, and the Thurston County Planning Commission.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $1,095.99

MAJOR DONORS: Jim Fox, Tim Rogers

ENDORSEMENTS: Steering committee includes Joe Beck, David Bremer, Walt Bowen, Jim Fox, and Garret Cooper

Amy Tousley

"As your council member, I will be professional and work for prudent investment in capital facilities"

BRIEF WIP BIO: Former Planning Commission Chair, strong rezone advocate

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Supports rezone and development

WEBSITE: www.amytousley.com

CANDIDATE BIO: The Tousley family moved to Olympia in 1991. These past 12 years, Amy has served as a city planning commissioner. Objective: Place value in community well-being.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $6,132.67

MAJOR DONORS: J.A. Morris (contractor), Paul Groven, Evergreen Olympic Properties

ENDORSEMENTS: Kingsbury, Machlis, Ottavelli, Jeannette Hawkins

Karen Veldheer

"Olympia needs leaders who want to listen and work with citizens."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Founding member of Cooper Crest neighborhood association, advocate for homeowner and consumer rights

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Opposes the rezone

WEBSITE: www.karenveldheer.com

CANDIDATE BIO: Karen Veldheer supports greater citizen involvement in City affairs. She formed a neighborhood association in her subdivision and is a strong advocate for consumer and homeowner rights.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $2,461.79

MAJOR DONORS: Philip Schulte, Clydia Cuykendall, Mary Anderson

ENDORSEMENTS: Karen Fraser, Brendan Williams, Sandra Romero, Citizens for a Responsive Local Govt.

CITY COUNCIL SEAT #5

Stephen Buxbaum

"I support community-driven comprehensive design and planning (rather than developer-driven spot rezones)"

BRIEF WIP BIO: Sustainability advocate, former state executive manager, board member of Dispute Resolution Center

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Opposes rezone

WEBSITE: www.nuprometheus.com/buxbaum

CANDIDATE BIO: I would bring experience to the Olympia City Council. I have worked with virtually every city and town in the state on funding affordable housing, infrastructure and/or small business assistance.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $ 4925.44

MAJOR DONORS: Joyce Kilmer (wife), Lisa Vatske, Thad Curtz

ENDORSEMENTS: Citizens for a Responsive Local Government, Paul Purcell, Bill Daley

Janine Gates

"I will advocate strong citizen participation on community issues and use your input to shape my decisions."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Environmental advocate and citizen journalist, president of SPEECH

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Opposes rezone

WEBSITE: www.oly-wa.us/Janine4olympia

CANDIDATE BIO: Janine Gates, an Olympia resident for 26 years, is self-employed as a photographer and caregiver for the elderly. She has two children ages 19 and 14.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $0.00

MAJOR DONORS: No details available

ENDORSEMENTS: George Barner (Port Commissioner), Paul Pickett and Chris Stearns (Public Utilities Commissioners)

Jeff Kingsbury

"[My] vision included market rate housing, world class parks and pathways, enhanced public safety, [and] vitality in our downtown core."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Actor, acerbic council member, elected in 2006, infamous for posting to Facebook during council meeting

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Supports rezone and development

WEBSITE: www.jeffkingsbury.com

CANDIDATE BIO: Not provided

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $10,165.00

MAJOR DONORS: Renee Ries, American Property Development, J.A. Morris

ENDORSEMENTS: Brendan Williams, Doug Mah, Master Builders (Affordable Housing Council), Police Guild

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Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. And you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. - Cesar Chavez, President of the Farm Workers Union, 1984

Olympia Local
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

CITY COUNCIL SEAT #6

No Photo Available

Jeannine Dellwo Roe

"My legislative experience has given me great insights into how to work constructively to make good decisions that benefit the majority, not just narrow interests."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Former political spouse; works for State Democratic Caucus

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Opposes the rezone

WEBSITE: Being developed

CANDIDATE BIO: Not provided

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $1,900.00

MAJOR DONORS: Charles and Marilyn Roe (parents)

ENDORSEMENTS: Senator Karen Fraser, Representative Sam Hunt, Citizens for a Responsive Local Government

No Photo Available

James Welling

BRIEF WIP BIO: Homeless advocate, not much recent campaign activity

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Unknown

WEBSITE: Unknown

CANDIDATE BIO: Not provided

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $0.00

MAJOR DONORS: No details available

ENDORSEMENTS: No details available

Joan Machlis

"I have taken leadership on a lawn mower exchange."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Appointed to council in January 2008. Strong advocate for downtown businesses.

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Supports rezone and development

WEBSITE: www.joanmachlis.com

CANDIDATE BIO: I focus on many issues as your councilperson: graffiti, sidewalks, crime, clean air, low-income and worker housing, downtown vitality and much more. I have 30+ years of related work and education to guide me.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $10,000.00

MAJOR DONORS: Self, Jim Morris of J.A. Morris (contractor)

ENDORSEMENTS: Doug Mah, Jeff Kingsbury, Olympia Police Guild

CITY COUNCIL SEAT #7

Tony Sermonti

"Our capitol city should set an example of excellence."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Former co-chair of Capital City Pride; more conservative than Joe Hyer

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Supports rezone and development

WEBSITE: www.sermonti.com

CANDIDATE BIO: Tony Sermonti works at the state Senate, is an Evergreen grad and former college Trustee. He is an FAA private pilot and former member of John Edwards' campaign staff.

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $1,760.82

MAJOR DONORS: Bergman & Frockt (Seattle law firm), J.A. Morris, Jeannette Hawkins

ENDORSEMENTS: None announced to date

Joe Hyer

"As a state capital, Olympia has special visibility, and special opportunities to be a leader among municipalities."

BRIEF WIP BIO: Councilmember appointed in summer of 2004. First election in which he has an opponent. Local business owner, climber and outdoor enthusiast.

POSITION ON ISTHMUS: Opposes, but weakly

WEBSITE: www.joehyer.com

CANDIDATE BIO: Not provided

CAMPAIGN FUNDS AS OF JUNE 1: $5,860.00

MAJOR DONORS: American Property Development, Inc., Jay Goldstein Law Office

ENDORSEMENTS: Karen Valenzuela, Doug Mah

Hyer currently occupies City Council Seat #7. However, he has not yet declared a seat for candidacy.

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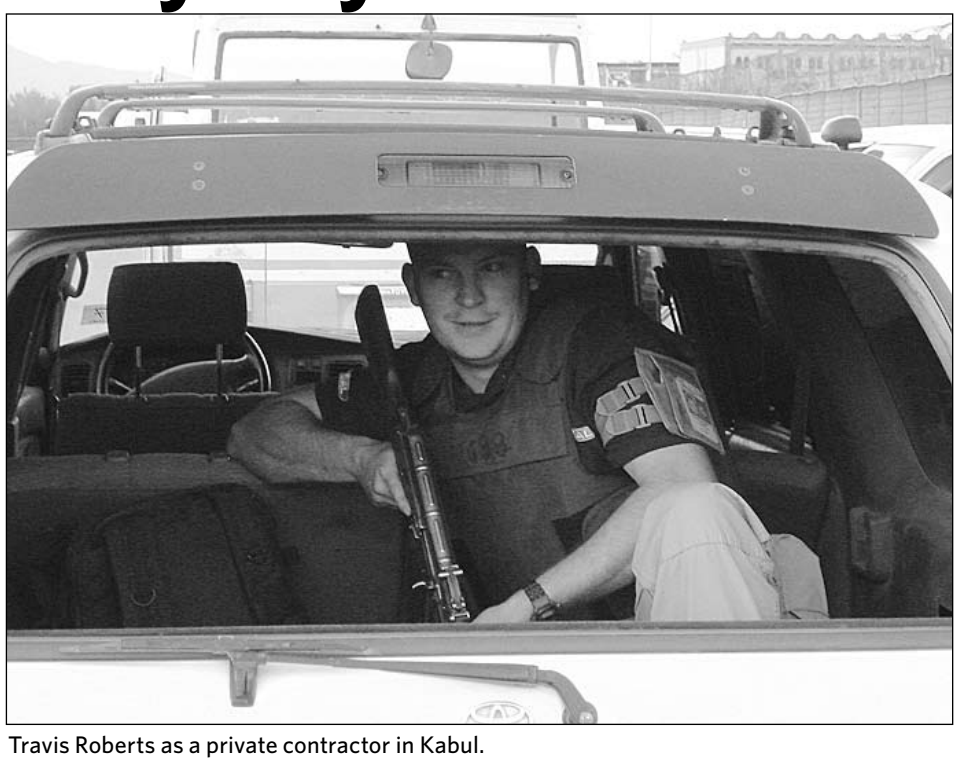
From Elma to Evergreen — by way of the "War on Terror"



Travis Roberts as a private contractor in Kabul.

by Phan Nguyen, from interviews with Travis Roberts

32-year-old Travis Roberts is not the kind of Evergreen student you would see profiled in Evergreen's promotional materials. As a former mercenary in Kosovo and Afghanistan, black market entrepreneur, pimp, and substance abuser with PTSD, Roberts isn't proud of his past either. But with the Obama administration's continued military pursuit of–*well, whatever*–in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Roberts's story deserves a hearing. It's as American as apple pie and the war on terror. And it forces us to question whether any war, however justified, can ever be just.

Travis Roberts is a local boy. Growing up in Elma, Washington in the 1980s, he used to wonder why so many Vietnam vets were living in the woods of nearby Capitol Forest. In 2006, after returning from Afghanistan and suffering from PTSD amassed from tours in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Egypt/Israel–and having squandered hundreds of thousands of dollars gained from the Afghan black market–Roberts journeyed to the same Capitol Forest to seek refuge, only to be driven out by the preponderance of meth addicts.

The Army years

It was ten years earlier, at age 20, that Roberts had joined the Army, figuring "that it was the only way that I could get a decent job and receive the school benefits that they offered, and the training."

One thing that did not influence his decision to enlist, however, was a patriotic sense of duty. "Before I went into the Army, I had a certain set of values," Roberts said. "And when I arrived at basic training, they issued me a new set of values....I knew they were going to do something like that. But I thought that I was too smart, that of course I'm going to believe in what I believe in. I'm not gonna think intervening in these foreign countries is a good thing. I'm not gonna think that using military might to reinforce foreign economic policies is wonderful and that everything's cool, or I'm just gonna become a conservative or whatever."

Roberts never did become a conservative. "But what happened was a little bit more personal somehow. I ended up internalizing these values of oppression on a more individual level, as far as the people that I worked with, the culture in the military, the hierarchy. And that played itself out eventually in my relationships with my children and my wife. I started ordering them around like a sergeant. I learned to put extra value on violence, because that was a part of what I did for so long."

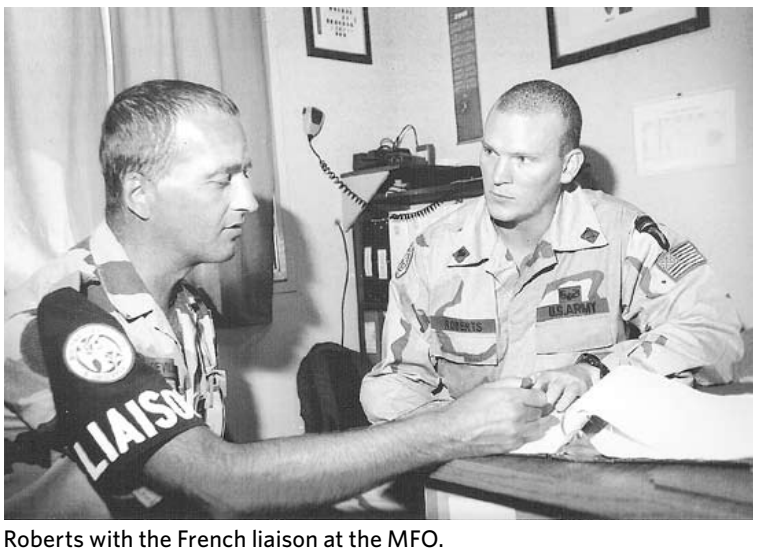
As part of his military intelligence training, Roberts studied Arabic at the Defense Language Institute, (DLI) where he was also assigned a Lebanese-American Muslim identity, "Kamal Shami."

After a stint in 1999 guarding the Egyptian–Israeli/Palestinian border with the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), Roberts returned to the US with two possessions: a medal for rescuing an Israeli policeman and PTSD.

New Mexico: peace, drugs, and the military–academic–industrial complex

In 2001, Roberts left the Army and enlisted in the New Mexico National Guard. He applied to work in the National Guard's drug interdiction program, but despite his qualifications, he was turned down. "Certain people were in control of that program, and I don't think they wanted anybody outside of their circle involved." He would later find out why. "I already knew that these guys carried the M-16s from the armory in their cars. I thought that was a little strange." One night, at a party, Roberts encountered "guys from my guard unit selling large quantities of drugs. And those guys happened to be the ones that were involved in the drug interdiction program. And everything started to make sense. All the convoys down to the border, it all seemed to fit together."

At the same time, Roberts was enrolled in the University of New Mexico, majoring in political science and later West Asian studies, with a minor in peace studies. The first class he took at UNM was in Ancient Near Eastern History with Prof. Richard Berthold, based on the merit that Berthold had just infamously proclaimed in reference to the recent 9/11 attacks, "Anybody who blows up the Pentagon gets my vote." That was good enough for Roberts. "I felt that what he said was right on. I immediately enrolled in his course."



Roberts with the French liaison at the MFO.

Roberts also became involved in local peace groups. In 2003, when former Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera was instated as President of the University of New Mexico, Roberts wondered, "Why is Louis Caldera, with all his Washington cronies, being installed as the president of the university that has so many research grants from the government to conduct research in collaboration with Los Alamos National Laboratories, weapons research at Sandia Laboratories and Kirtland Air Force Base, and all these very controversial weapons research programs?" Sure enough, Caldera began promoting more military research at UNM. At an open forum, Roberts scolded Caldera. The UNM student newspaper described the scene:

> *Travis Roberts, a UNM senior and military veteran...described what he called the mass murder of thousands of innocent civilians by technology designed, at least in part, at Sandia National Laboratories and Kirtland Air Force Base–two military institutions UNM has research grants from. "Shame on you, President Caldera, for allowing this institution, which is supposed to foster education and life, to contribute to the atrocities occurring in the world," said Roberts, who broke down into tears as he spoke.*

Roberts credits his time as a peace activist as one of the times he has felt proudest. It wouldn't last.

> "Prostitution and the 'War on Terror' are two things that go hand-in-hand. Wherever the troops go, the prostitutes follow."

Get rich quick in Afghanistan

In 2004, Roberts suffered a mental breakdown. He quit school and moved to Tennesssee. Unemployed with a pregnant wife and two children, Roberts was offered a job that would utilize the skills he knew best. He signed a one-year contract with Group 4 Falck, an Irish/British security company (now known as G4S) to provide security for US army personnel in Kosovo. He was now a private military contractor.

After his contract ended, Roberts took a more lucrative contract with Global Risk Strategies, assigned to guard the US embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan for $167,000 a year. But there were opportunities to make even more money on the side. "A lot of people working [as contractors] at the embassy–they all have something going on the side. Everybody had capital, because we made so much money at the embassy. With 14 grand a month coming in, and with prices of things cheap in Afghanistan, you can pretty much finance things. You have capital. It doesn't take long to save up enough money to launch some type of investment in Afghanistan when you're working at the embassy."

The situation in Afghanistan was prime for business. "Just like anywhere you go, there's already a surplus of people there with a lot of good business ideas, and the only thing they're missing is capital. And everybody over there with any connection to the contractors knows that the contractors are capital, because they're all made of money. And they would always approach you–especially once they got to know you–with their business idea.

"It's like a bank–people coming in and asking for loans–I have an idea, I wanna start this business, I wanna do this. It doesn't take long before you have an idea of who knows how to do what."

Indeed, for contractors, such businesses could not be avoided. "The State Dept. wouldn't give us permission to carry weapons or to bring weapons on convoys. I think that it had something to do with liability. I don't think that they wanted to send me and the people that I worked with–the South Africans–out on these convoys with their weapons to possibly create a massacre. They wanted to tell us that our job starts when we get to the embassy. And what happens in between there is on us.

"But anybody that has been there knows that you can't move busloads and long convoys full of westerners through parts of Afghanistan unarmed." The inference was that the contractors would have to rely on sources not directly tied to the US. "So we were forced to purchase large quantities of weapons on the black market–AK-47s, Makarov pistols–because we had to provide security for ourselves. And not only that, but the arms dealers we were dealing with, that worked for our company, were under investigation for purchasing Stinger missiles for the Taliban. But see, that's the kind of connections that you need in order to operate in Afghanistan successfully. You just can't operate without that. If we didn't have those kinds of connections, then we would've been impotent to carry out our tasks."

Going "freelance"

In May 2006 Roberts was promoted to chief intelligence officer. Soon after, he overdosed on a combination of valium, codeine, alcohol, and hashish. "I was unconscious. I woke up four days later." He was also fired.

By that time, Roberts was already separated from his wife, pending divorce. "I started up an operation after I lost my job. It only took me a week. I had rented out my own compound, hired a security team, rented vehicles, and sat down and formulated a plan to make some serious money selling information and brokering deals between different firms and providing services, such as manpower or bringing equipment to the people who needed it–for example, weapons, communications equipment, people. I had stacks of résumés." As a front, the compound operated as a restaurant with a business license from the Afghan Investment Support Agency.

There were thousands of unemployed Nepalese Gurkhas in Afghanistan, trafficked in by the Nepalese Mafia under empty promises of work. "Once I opened my restaurant, they all started coming there, and they're all giving me their résumés, and they all begged for work. There were enough unemployed Nepalese guys in Kabul to staff an entire battalion, if not a brigade. I sent e-mails out to all the security companies....I'd go through the stack and find people they needed and take a payment from the security company."

Roberts could supply manpower to a broad clientele. "Yeah, the US or anybody, you know–the Afghan national army, Australian security companies, British security companies, the Danish Embassy, whatever. You know, 'The Danish Embassy needs additional security because of the cartoons that came out about the Prophet Mohammed in Denmark, so we need an extra twenty guys to guard the embassy because people are gonna come burn it down.' Then I would say, okay, well I got twenty guys. Give me $20,000 and then here they are–today, standing tall."

Roberts also sold intelligence. After soliciting his services to various multinational companies operating in Afghanistan, "all these people would come over to my restaurant and introduce themselves. And if they had a requirement for a certain type of information, then they'd ask me. Like PSI would come over and say, 'We're bidding on the embassy contract and we require this information which we think will improve our odds of obtaining the security contract at the embassy. Can you provide us with that information, and if so, here's the price.' And I would say, okay, yeah, I got that information, or I can get that information. Let's do this deal. Give me cash. That's how it was done."

One of the primary ways intelligence was collected was through another branch of Roberts's business: prostitution. "I brought in

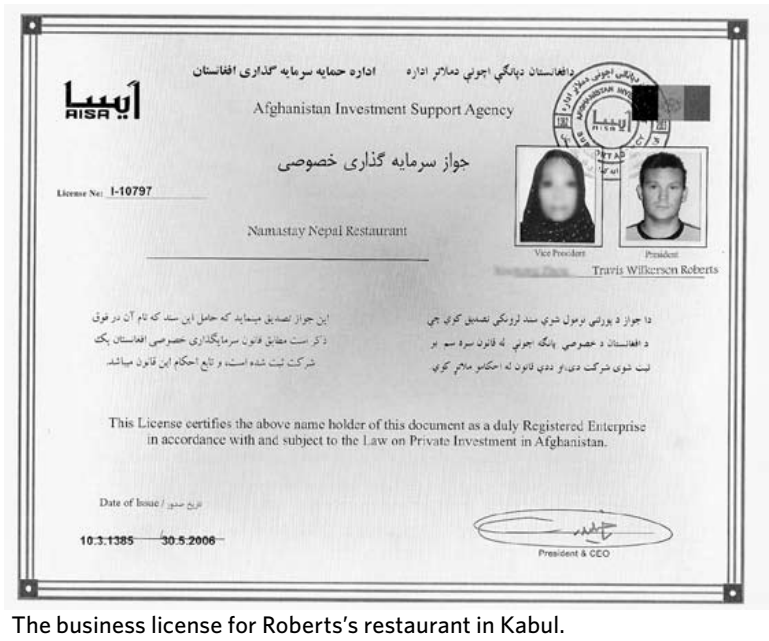
the women via the Nepalese Mafia, under visas to come and work at my restaurant. And that's when we turned this compound into a brothel."

**First comes war—
then comes prostitution**

Roberts wants people to be clear: "Prostitution and the 'War on Terror' are two things that go hand-in-hand. Wherever the troops go, the prostitutes follow. And I'm not talking about a few. I'm talking about thousands and thousands of Chinese prostitutes. Everywhere where US troops go, everywhere where there's contractors, hundreds of brothels pop up.

"And it's not just the US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. I know a lot of these hookers. They follow 'em wherever they go: Sudan, Ivory Coast. French troops go to the Ivory Coast—thousands of Chinese hookers in the Ivory Coast. Dubai is a transit point for everybody going to these wars. And there's thousands and thousands of 'em there. That's one thing—the link between prostitution and the 'warriors on terror.'"

When Roberts worked as a contractor, the security companies "would bus us down to the whorebar, provide security for the bus while we were all inside, pay a driver, pay somebody to stand out there. Sometimes we'd rent out the entire whorebars for the entire evening." But it wasn't limited to contractors. Roberts recalls that in Kosovo, the US Army's MWR (Morale, Welfare, and Recreation) would bus soldiers to Bulgaria to indulge in prostitution.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30.5.2006
President & CEO
The business license for Roberts's restaurant in Kabul.

Despite the activities occurring in his compound, Roberts had little to worry from the authorities. "The Kabul government was set up to do business. The government doesn't care if you pimp hos." He received visits from the tax collector, which he simply brushed aside. Besides, "every single business over there was like that, even the ones that operated with contracts with the State Department—everything that goes on over there is shady. They all have prostitutes living in their offices. All the restaurants over there in Kabul are filled with Westerners, and you don't know who they work for. You don't know what they're doing. But they all have something going on. And they all work for somebody, and they're all buying and selling something. You can bet on that."

Roberts didn't fear the Afghan government, but the Taliban and the Afghan people were another thing. Major anti-US riots erupted in 2006 after a US military truck crashed into several Afghan civilian cars, killing several people. For security, Roberts rigged up a harness that would enable him to hide inside a well. Moreover, the Taliban had retaken most of the countryside. Establishments similar to Roberts's had been attacked. "The security situation had eroded to a point where I couldn't operate safely. I couldn't guarantee my own safety. Also, being involved in this was just really taking its toll on my conscience and my ability to function mentally and emotionally. I just couldn't maintain myself—I couldn't keep doing that. So I quit."

Roberts left Afghanistan in the fall of 2006 and traveled to China, where he spent $30,000 in ten days, mostly on drugs, alcohol, and women. "I spent so much money on nothing. I didn't know people could spend that much money and not have it anymore."

He returned to the US and eventually made his way back to Elma, Washington. Capitol Forest, with its predominance of meth heads, proved inhospitable, so he moved into the woods north of Elma, living on MREs ("meals ready to eat") that he had saved from his Army years. "I set up my tent, threw a mattress inside of it, and stayed there for the whole winter. Matter of fact, it was the Hannukah Eve Windstorm, and a tree fell on my tent. It was bad. There were trees always falling on my tent. It was really cold. It got down to the teens, twice in November that year."

His remaining money was lost at the bar in Elma, where he would spend hundreds of dollars in alcohol a day.

He was finally convinced to move into a friend's house in March 2007. A girlfriend in Seattle, who would later become his wife, moved in with him. Roberts needed a job, so again he relied on his specialized skills. He signed up for another year-long tour in Kosovo as a miiltary contractor. He was forced to resign after six months, however, when the company doctor told him his blood pressure was too high to continue.

Upon returning to the Pacific northwest, Roberts enrolled at The Evergreen State College, where he is now finishing up the degree that he was working on in New Mexcio. He is currently studying "Art and Activism." He sees a therapist in Aberdeen to deal with his PTSD. He has been sober for two months.

Twelve years of a young life

There are many lessons that Travis Roberts learned that he hopes he can impart on others. "The alcohol's a big one. If you don't know that alcohol and violence are part of the military, you'll find out real quick" when you enlist. "Then the prostitutes and black market follow." Roberts's adulthood has revolved around the military, war, and corruption. In the New Mexico National Guard, he learned that the drug war was used to facilitate the drug trade. At the University of New Mexico, he found himself confronting the nexus between the Military–Industrial Complex and the University, under the aegis of its then-president, Louis Caldera.

Even his role as a peacekeeper on the Egyptian–Israeli border with the MFO wasn't honorable. The establishment of the mfo in 1981 freed Israel from minding the Egyptian front, which in turn allowed it to invade Lebanon in 1982, resulting in the deaths of up to 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinians—in addition to facilitating further Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank. "The MFO was designed in Israel's favor," said Roberts.

In Kosovo and Afghanistan, Roberts witnessed first-hand and participated in the micro-economy that props up around war zones, an economy that mimics the greater corporate needs that fuel wars. "I modeled my business [in Afghanistan] completely after US corporations. I exploited the natives, I ripped off my investors, I avoided paying taxes, I skirted the rules and regulations. There was no oversight. It was the Wild West. Anything could go.

"As long as [my clients] could pay, we could do anything we wanted. We could kill anybody, we could do anything. As long as we weren't attacking the US."

As for the benefit to the Afghanis, "most of the Afghanis that supported the presence of foreigners in their country are the Afghanis that benefited from it, and that's a very limited sector of the population. If somebody wanted to go get an interview of an Afghani saying that having the US troops here is wonderful, it wouldn't be hard. All you'd have to do is go down to the embassy and find somebody that makes $600 a month, which is more money than most Afghanis make in a year, and ask him, 'Is it cool that the Americans are here?' And they're gonna give you all the right answers, on camera.

"But if you are a Muslim and you speak Arabic, and you're learning Farsi, and you know about Islam [*Roberts had been assuming the Kamal Shami identity he was given at* DLI], eventually even those people will open up and tell you that the only reason they support the US is because they have a job. And if Massoud was here, they'd kick the fucking US out. That's what they always say. [*Ahmad Shah Massoud was a leader in the Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation.*]

"These contractors that I worked with, they don't care if the Afghan people are fucked over. They just want a job. They hope we stay over there as long as we can so they can keep working and making phat bank."

Fucked up

When asked to comment on public indifference toward the ongoing "War on Terror," Roberts said, "I want people to—I wish that my buddies—I've had three buddies, two extremely close friends, put bullets through their own brains. And I think that in both cases, it was because they couldn't deal with this. They couldn't deal with this at all. They couldn't go to the therapy in Aberdeen or this or that. And they both put bullets through their brains.

"One went to Kosovo in 2001 and put a bullet through his brain there, on Camp Bondsteel, where I spent two years. He put a bullet through his brain there. And then another close friend in Kosovo put a bullet through his brain.

"There's all kinds of vets that kill themselves. Thousands of 'em. Why? Because they know the reality of what's going on. They actually know what's going on, and they can't deal with it because it's so fucked up.

"You know, I can't walk anywhere—two blocks from my house—because I'm so afraid of dogs. I was never afraid of dogs before, and I don't know if it's because of when I was in Afghanistan. I had to shoot a lot of dogs and cats in Afghanistan, because they're starved and feral and they're everywhere.

"But one day in particular, I was walking along in Afghanistan and shit hit the fan. I heard some dogs growling, and I came around the corner, and I looked over there, and there was a girl laying on the ground, on the side of the road. Nobody else in sight. And her feet were sticking out—what was left of her feet. They were all burned. Her arms were sticking out—one hand completely gone, one hand no fingers. All arms burnt. Belly burnt. Face completely untouched. And, I mean, she was beautiful—probably about 14. And the dogs were freakin'—had one of her arms pulled out into the road, tugging on it. And the feet—as soon as I came around the corner, I saw a dog just rip a piece of her foot off and run away, and other dogs were chasing it and trying to get to the feet. And she was alive.

"And you know, I really didn't know what to do. I was looking around, trying to figure out what was going on. I fired off a round from my pistol, and all the dogs scattered. But they didn't scatter very far; they were in a big circle around me. I walked over to her, and I stood there for a few minutes, looking around, yelling for people. I was afraid, because these dogs were snarling. And they weren't very far away from me. And you know, I really didn't know what to do about this whole situation. She was burnt to a crisp. She was alive, but she was just staring straight up into the sky. And the dogs were eating her. She didn't even seem to notice. I really just didn't know what to do.

"So eventually I made a decision. I put a bullet in her—in her face. Right here [*points between the eyes*].

"I think about that a lot. I have a lot of nightmares about that. And I just don't think that people think about that when they think about the war in Afghanistan or the escalation of the troops. I think people just see a news flash, or something scrolling along the bottom of the screen. That's what I think they think of. Just numbers. 17,000. What's that mean? I don't know.

"I want people to understand that war means something a lot different than what they see in the movies, where one side lines up, then another side lines up, and they shoot at each other. There's a lot more to it than that. It's not two sides fighting. The whole thing is fucked up. People don't know how fucked-up fucked up is. You can't even explain it, because it doesn't make any sense."

Roberts inside his restaurant.

> "I felt that if I got killed in Afghanistan, I'd deserve it—the whole time I was there. I figured that I had it coming. I was just waiting for somebody to take me out, because I knew I deserved it."

The saying "War is Hell" is a cliché. It says nothing about the civilians who died in it. It says nothing about how it could have been avoided. It says nothing about those who profit from it, from the industries that live off of it. And it makes no sense of it.

"I felt that if I got killed in Afghanistan, I'd deserve it—the whole time I was there. I figured that I had it coming. I was just waiting for somebody to take me out, because I knew I deserved it."

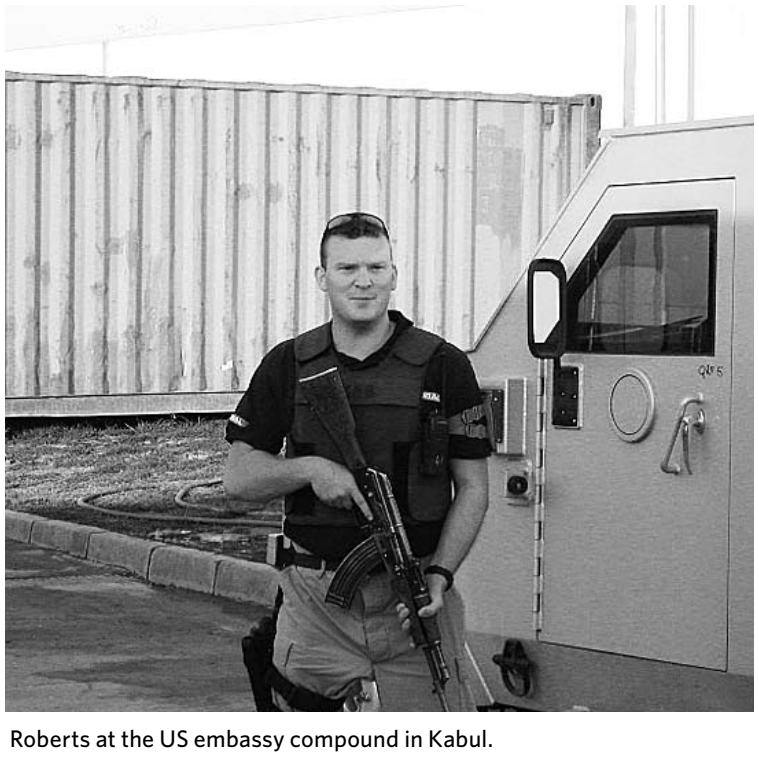
Even worse, "War is Hell" normalizes war. It honors those who engage in war and survive. It signals a rite of passage, a proud scar that demonstrates that what didn't kill someone made them stronger.

But for Roberts, "Before I joined the Army, I used to be a completely different person. I used to be so happy. I used to have some kind of a spark. I used to be able to do so much stuff and produce high-quality work. But I can't now. I can't concentrate."

Roberts never expected the Army to change him the way it did. "Unfortunately, I thought that I was better than that. And then these things that I gained in the Army made me worse. And now I'm trying to reverse that process."

What Roberts internalized from the Army grew as he utilized the training that he was given, until he got carried away by the "excesses" of war. Yet Roberts's experiences demonstrate that nothing in war was ever "excess." It was always part of the scheme.

This article originally appeared in slightly different form in issue two of The Evergreen State College's alternative student publication, The Counter Point Journal (*cxpj.wordpress.com*)


Roberts at the US embassy compound in Kabul.

New Thurston County Farm Map celebrates 44 local farms

by Caitlin Krenn

The 2009 Thurston County Direct Sales Farm Map has been released by the South of the Sound Community Farm Land Trust. The map provides a guide to area farms offering fresh, seasonal products throughout the year. It features a listing of 44 local producers of vegetables, meat, fiber, honey, flowers, fertilizer, berries, and other farm goods for sale directly to consumers.

"Finding people to eat what we grow is a huge part of what we do," says Kenari Breshem, who recently started Phoebe Farm with fellow farmer Aaron Varadi. Theirs is one of eight new farms featured in the 2009 map. "The farm map provides a vital service by linking community members to local growers."

The Farm Map is produced and distributed each year by the South of the Sound Community Farm Land Trust, an Olympia-based organization dedicated to the permanent affordability, agricultural production, and stewardship of farmland in the South Sound. Its publication is sponsored by the listed producers and other businesses and organizations that support local agriculture.

This year's map also features highlights from the land trust's recently completed Thurston County Farmland Inventory. The inventory suggests that the majority of the county's farmland is at high risk of being converted to other uses. Seventy five percent of the farmland mapped in the inventory is within three miles of an urban growth boundary, and therefore vulnerable to increasing development pressures.

In spite of these and other challenges, many local farms are thriving. Among the seventeen counties in Western Washington, Thurston County ranks third in terms of both the amount of certified organic acres (2,900) and the estimated value of organic goods sold directly from the farm. Many of the farms listed in the guide are certified organic by the USDA. Others strive to preserve environmental quality and wildlife habitat, and convey these practices through close relationships with customers.

Direct sales marketing is key to the success of many area small- and medium-sized farms, who sell their products at on-farm stands, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscription programs. While many local producers rely on word of mouth as their primary form of advertisement, the Farm Map provides an avenue for reaching a broader audience. 12,000 copies will be distributed this year.

"It's a thrill to see our name in print and know that the farm map is being used by so many people," says Breshem, who joins other local producers in a diversified approach to marketing her goods. She and business partner Varadi grow vegetables, seed crops, and pastured poultry for local restaurants and an on-site farm stand. "The map helps people find what they're looking for, locally. When I first moved to Olympia and was looking for a farm job, I used the farm map to find which farms I could ride my bike to. Now people can find my farm on the map."

Left Foot Organics is one of 44 farms listed in the new Thurston County Farm Map.

One important direct marketing outlet for local farm goods was inadvertently left off this year's farm map—the three year old Tumwater Town Center Farmers Market. The Tumwater Market opened on May 27 and runs every Wednesday, 11 am–2 pm through October. The market is located at the corner of Capitol Boulevard and Israel Road. For more information, call 360-464-5879 or visit the market's website at *www.tumwaterfarmersmarket.org*.

The 2009 Thurston County Direct Sales Farm Map is free and can be found throughout the county at farmers markets, restaurants, government agencies, and participating businesses. An online version is available at *www.communityfarmlandtrust.org*. For more information, or to help distribute farm maps in your community, call (360) 402-0302.

Caitlin Krenn is the Membership & Development Coordinator for South of the Sound Community Farm Land Trust.

Strike for climate justice on December 11, 2009

by Jeffrey Luers

Editor's Note: Although December 11 is over six months away, we are still running this piece because Mr. Luers' proposals for action will likely take as long to organize. People should begin talking with their co-workers now, and encouraging their friends to do the same. Nation-wide organizing must begin in order to answer the call out. Lack of union membership does not need to prevent anyone from organizing for this action. As unionized workers make up only 12.4% of the American workforce, a general strike could not only be successful without any participation from organized labor, but this action is likely to not gain their support, as unions are currently on the defensive and understandably anxious to preserve what little they have left in an age of austerity and will be unlikely to endorse a strike that is so clearly in violation of the Taft-Hartley legislation. If successful, the proposed Strike for Climate Justice would likely resemble 2006's 'Day Without an Immigrant' more than a classical, union-driven general strike.

Around the world, from entire nations to tiny communities, people are beginning to feel the heat of global warming. Earlier this year, deadly wildfires raged across a drought-stricken Australia, where the continent continues to suffer through one of the worst droughts in its history. In South America, the accelerated melting of Andean glaciers is threatening water supplies in Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru. In Tanzania, 85% of Mt. Kilimanjaro's glaciers have already melted, severely affecting the availability of water in this African nation. A recent study by the Colorado-based National Center for Atmospheric Research has found that global warming has had a much more significant and damaging impact on the world's rivers than has been previously realized. This discovery now underscores a growing threat to food and water supplies for millions of people living in some of the world's poorest regions. Meanwhile, an Oxfam report has warned that by 2015, the number of people affected by climate-related crises will raise by 54% to 375 million people.

The impact of global warming will not just be felt by the poorer nations who are less able to respond to the crisis. In March, some of the world's top climate scientists warned the U.S. Congress that severe drought in the western portion of the United States could make tracts of land from California to Oklahoma into a waste land, with heat waves that could make life impossible in northern cities. Recent studies in the Arctic have shown that the melting of Arctic ice is happening faster than any climate models predicted. This rapid melt is threatening to leave the Arctic ice free as early as 2013.

The looming crisis is threatening to create millions of climate refugees. As people flee drought plagued regions in search of water, others retreat from coastal regions in order to escape rising flood waters. The impending catastrophe demands immediate action on the part of both industrial and developing countries. However, we need more than just political action; the world needs action from the carbon emitting industries themselves. Yet, despite the ever growing wealth of scientific evidence that the planet is warming at a disastrous rate due to human activity, industry continues to resist caps on CO_2 emissions. This resistance by the most powerful multinationals is making strict government action and regulation on climate change difficult, particularly for leaders who fear losing corporate support and money. While most of the world's governments struggle with what, if any, demands to make toward forcing immediate and strict reductions in carbon emissions, the world's poor continue to suffer the effects of a warming world. Even the wealthiest nations are unable to avoid the heat, and many industrial countries are beginning to suffer its effects.

The state of California, however, is demonstrating that combating climate change is not only necessary but can be good for the economy. If California were to be ranked as a nation, it would be the 7th largest economy in the world. The state, under governor Schwarzenegger, has signed laws making it mandatory to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and to 85% of 1990 levels by 2050. Moreover, these cuts are expected to create an estimated one million jobs.

In early May, scientists at Oxford University concluded a study that revealed the world has already burned half of the carbon necessary to bring about a catastrophic rise of 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in average global temperature. At this temperature, nearly half of the world's plants and animals will be threatened by extinction. These scientists say that half a trillion tonnes of carbon have been consumed since the Industrial Revolution. In order to avoid a 2 degree Celsius rise in temperature, the total amount of carbon burned most be kept below one trillion tonnes. At current rates of consumption, that figure will be reached in 40 years. Myles Allen, the climate scientist who led the study, has this to say about the threat of climate change: "Mother nature doesn't care about dates. To avoid dangerous climate change, we will have to limit the total amount of carbon we inject into the atmosphere, not just the emission rate in any given year."

The world needs to begin the shift towards a non-carbon based economy. Scientists in every nation have reached the same conclusion and are warning that we must take action now to reduce CO_2 emissions and invest in clean energy if we are to prevent the nearing global environmental crisis. In nations around the globe, the public have demanded action on climate change. Yet, all too often their voices go unheard. There is a growing campaign to change that; reaching across borders and beyond political lines and affiliations in an effort to bring those who will be most affected by climate change together in one powerful voice. In every nation the working class is the beating heart. It is the workers who keep society running smoothly. But, it is the working class and the working poor who will be hit the hardest by a warmer world, which means that we must harness the power at our fingertips and demand immediate action to be taken to curb greenhouse gas emissions. We need climate justice today, not tomorrow. We need deeds and not promises.

On December 11th, in response to the international climate talks in Copenhagen, we ask that everyone concerned with global warming and climate change to join us in an International General Strike demanding climate action. Our work stoppage can have a global impact. Together, in a show of solidarity and unity, we can demonstrate to world leaders that the global consensus is for action to stop climate change. They cannot ignore our voices when we strike. For one day we will shut the system down and demand that our governments work together to act in our best interests. On December 11th, Strike for Climate Justice! Demand Action!

Jeffrey Luers is a political prisoner who is currently being held at the Columbia River Correctional Institution on a ten-year sentence for actions taken against an SUV dealership in Eugene, OR.

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